

Evaluation of the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation Immigrant Education Network

Executive Summary

In 2006, the Deutsche Bank Americas Foundation (DBAF) formed a new funding strand focused on immigrant education. The foundation's aim was to improve the educational opportunities and performance of underserved immigrant students in New York City (NYC) public schools and to maximize "students' potential to ultimately access higher education." Toward this end, DBAF directs resources to programs and institutions that have "proven effective in improving student learning and raising academic performance."

DBAF currently has provided grant funding to ten organizations to support projects that aim to improve outcomes for immigrant students in NYC schools. In addition, the foundation has taken steps to form a network of grantees participating in this funding strand. Representatives of participating organizations meet at DBAF on a quarterly basis to report on progress, share effective practices and strategies, and forge connections. The foundations' aim for these meetings has been to stimulate network members to learn from one another and to work collaboratively toward common goals. Given the emerging nature of this network of grantees, the foundation expressed interest in conducting an evaluation to understand the effects of this initiative and the best ways to move forward in the future.

The George Washington University Center for Equity and Excellence in Education (GW-CEEE) conducted an evaluation of the DBAF Immigrant Education Network. The purpose was to examine current endeavors, to inform the refinement of DBAF's funding targets to ensure coverage of critical topics, and to clarify how the Foundation can facilitate the development of a network of organizations to increase its impact on immigrant education issues. The evaluation covers a two year period, from November 2006 to December 2008.

Evaluation findings were presented through two reports addressing five evaluation questions. Findings for all five questions are summarized as follows.

Summary of Findings

1. What delivery systems have been developed with support from DBAF grants to improve educational success of immigrant youth?

The majority of grants awarded since November 2006 support direct services to immigrant education services centered on training and/or professional development for parents and parent coordinators (AFC, APEX, CIET, and LL) or for teachers and other school staff (FHO and INPS). A few DBAF grants included advocacy related to improving policies and practices in immigrant education.

Students are the ultimate target audience for all DBAF immigrant education network projects. The range of language groups served approximates most of the top languages spoken in the NYC schools (New York City English Language Learners: Demographics, 2008). DBAF-supported projects address the full range of grade levels from early childhood (EC) to elementary school (ES), middle school (MS), high school (HS), and post-secondary education. A brief description of the ten DBAF supported projects developed to improve the educational success of immigrant youth follows:

Advocates for Children (AFC)

The *Immigrant Rights Project* assisted underserved immigrant parents through workshops, information and outreach to inform parents and students about available legal services, their legal rights, and about the school system as they face school-related challenges. A second grant supported continued services and the development of an advocacy document called “*Blueprint on Immigrant Parent Partnerships in New York City Schools*”

Coalition for Asian American Children and Families (CACF)

The organization published *Breaking Down Barriers: Immigrant Families and Early Childhood Education in New York City*, based on extensive research on immigrant families’ access to early childhood education programs.

Comprehensive Development Initiative (CDI)

Life-Link is a CDI program designed to provide post-graduation services including mentoring, counseling, tutoring, college advisement and career support services to approximately 170 immigrant students following graduation from Manhattan Comprehensive High School.

Facing History and Ourselves (FHO)

FHO’s immigration project entailed presenting educator workshops on issues relevant to new Americans (citizenship, immigration issues, education and human rights) followed by activities with a cohort of teachers and principals in five public high schools to infuse a Facing History immigration-focused curriculum.

Internationals Network for Public Schools (INPS)

The organization offered two Internationals Network Summer Institutes, a teacher professional development program targeting ten Internationals High Schools and a “*Project to Enhance College Access*” with the purpose of developing the capacity in teachers to prepare immigrant students for college.

LaGuardia Community College - Center for Immigrant Education and Training (CIET)

Parents Connecting with Schools is a project that addresses ESL, literacy and parent leadership skills through programming at the community college for immigrant parents to assume leadership roles through volunteering, attending PTA meetings, and participating in school leadership teams.

Learning Leaders (LL)

DBAF has supported two consecutive years of funding for the *Immigrant Outreach Project: Brooklyn*. The pilot program consisted of three workshops for immigrant parents. A second year

of funding has included the hiring of a Program Coordinator, a Haitian-Creole speaker familiar with the local community, who conducts workshops and training sessions in the West Indian Community.

New York Community Media Alliance (NYCMA)

Its first project, *Voices that Must be Heard*, entailed the creation of a weekly online publication which culls articles from a variety of ethnic newspapers. *Public Education Beat Ethnic Community Press Fellowship*, its second project, is a ten month program offering ethnic journalists training to broaden their knowledge base on education issues in NYC, strengthen their investigative reporting skills, and expand their resources.

New York Immigration Coalition (NYIC)

NYIC's first immigrant education project, the *Equity Monitoring Project for Immigrant and Refugee Education* (EMPIRE), is a collaborative of seven community-based organizations that meets regularly to plan strategies for addressing the educational needs of immigrant constituencies. DBAF also supported the development of a policy brief, *Getting it Right: Ensuring a Quality Education for English Language Learners in New York City*.

New York University Metropolitan Center for Urban Education (NYU Metro)

Metro Center developed a modular mentorship-tutoring program for high schools students called *Deutsche Bank Adolescent Post-Secondary Education Exchange* (APEX). The program provides 60 high school students of immigrant origin from five public schools in NYC with two years of mentoring support in their junior and senior years of high school.

2. In what ways have DBAF grantees carried out their projects and how have participants responded?

To capture the unique characteristics of each DBAF grant, data were collected from each grantee and summarized as “snapshots” of project implementation. Categories of projects included direct services for parents, direct services for students, professional development for teachers, and advocacy.

- *Direct services for parents.* Strategies for delivering parent education and training range from leadership development (CIET and LL), to English language and literacy development (CIET), to building families' awareness of their rights to receive educational services and programs and organizing them to advocate for themselves (AFC). AFC, CIET and LL each appear to have identified promising strategies to address the needs of immigrant families.
- *Direct services for students.* Data for CDI and APEX are reported. A third project, INPS 2 (*College Access*), also provides similar services. CDI's *Life-Link* appeared to be well-received by the small sample of participants interviewed. The APEX program recruitment and retention of immigrant college students as mentors was not as successful as program staff had hoped. APEX staff demonstrated that they have learned a great deal about the needs of the mentors and students they serve, have tried a number of strategies to identify those that are effective, and are making appropriate program adjustments.

- *Professional development for teachers.* Participants at FHO and INPS professional development events are highly satisfied with their experiences and believe it has been valuable for improving their practice.
- *Advocacy.* AFC, CACF and NYCIC developed and distributed policy briefs that provided relevant insights on issues affecting immigrant education services. NYCMA fellows/journalists gained insights about immigrant education issues and wrote articles to inform their readers.

3. In what ways has DBAF funding contributed to building the capacity of grantee organizations?

This question examined the effect of DBAF funding on the capacity of grantee organizations to improve immigrant education in New York City. Between 50 – 60% of grantees said that the funding had helped their organization to “a significant or great extent” to increase the effectiveness of services, increase the numbers of people served, sustain programs, carry out advocacy work, and build delivery systems for immigrant education. Ninety percent of grantees indicated that DBAF funding contributed to advancing their organization’s mission and 80% said the grant helped them achieve organizational objectives.

4. How has participation in the network affected the work of the grantee organizations to improve immigrant education?

Data for Evaluation Question 4 indicate that network members feel that positive steps have been taken toward the formation of a network, but think more work is needed to help members understand the purpose and nature of the network and to develop a shared vision. Participants are generally satisfied with the quarterly meetings, and although it is sometimes challenging to present a dilemma, this activity is perceived as valuable. Other aspects of the network that members perceive positively are jointly reflecting on collective experiences and communicating progress and achievements related to immigrant education work.

Several grantees reported that as a result of participating in DBAF quarterly meetings they had learned useful strategies for strengthening their overall programs. Some participants felt satisfaction depended on the extent to which the organizations shared similar circumstances and goals, but others thought it was useful to hear a range of perspectives and ideas.

The level of collaboration among grantee organizations ranged from Level 2 to Level 5 on a five-point scale developed by Frey, Lohmeier, Lee and Tollefson (2006). Organizations with common goals and those involved in the EMPIRE network tended to collaborate most. A majority of grantee organizations indicated they would like DBAF to expend somewhat more or a lot more effort in building and sustaining collaboration among grantee organizations.

Grantee organizations said they also collaborate with a number of offices of the NYC DOE, in particular with the Offices of English Language Learners (90%), Translation and Interpretation

(70%) and Multiple Pathways (50%). The majority of grantees perceived their relationship with NYC DOE as somewhat productive to productive, but this seemed to vary substantially depending on the particular office and the nature of the collaboration. Many grantees found it challenging to effect reforms in NYC DOE. Several expressed interest in building their relationships with the department.

Survey results indicated that a sense of shared purpose is still emerging among the network, and that the wide range of differing goals and philosophies among network members may, to some extent, prevent the group from achieving as much of a sense of cohesion as might be possible with a more homogeneous group. At the same time, the lesser degree of cohesion may need to be weighed against the benefits of including a range of diverse perspectives. Finally, nearly 80% of grantees perceive that DBAF-funded projects have fostered positive change in educational services for immigrant students to a significant or great extent.

5. To what extent are the funded activities aligned with the DBAF Immigrant Education goals?

As part of the evaluation, GW-CEEE guided DBAF and its network in developing a logic model aligned with DBAF Immigrant Education Program Goals to analyze current activities within a theory of change. Members of the network agreed that the ultimate aims are to reduce disparity gaps for immigrant students and ELLs. Specifically, these gaps include high school graduation and attendance rates, attainment of the Regent's diploma, and college enrollment and graduation.

To forward these aims, grantees are implementing a variety of strategies, including training and professional development for students, parents, teachers, counselors and school personnel; legal advice and support for parents; mentoring, tutoring and counseling for students; training for journalists; curriculum and resource development; and development and dissemination of policy briefs, blueprints and web pages.

Grantees' greatest priorities for strengthening the network included *advocacy work to foster policy improvements* and *media work* to increase understanding of immigrant education issues among the public, among others.

Analysis of the theory of change indicated that the activities and strategies of network members are aligned with DBAF's goals. However, due to geographical dispersion, the range of target populations, and the size of the network, it may be difficult to observe a measurable impact on DBAF's ultimate aims. The variety of strategies being implemented represents both a strength and a challenge for the network.

Summary of Recommendations

Recommendations based on the results of this evaluation include:

- *Develop and implement a comprehensive plan for the network.* A comprehensive plan could be developed based on the logic model to identify shared goals and

objectives for the immigrant education network and an overall strategy for achieving them.

- *Implement targeted strategies for aligning DBAF investments with medium-term outcomes.* It will be important to target DBAF's investments in ways that are likely to have a measurable impact, i.e. at the level of medium-term outcomes on the logic model. Proposal guidelines could include criteria for the types of projects that would be likely to benefit secondary student achievement within DBAF's established funding period.
- *Develop a capacity-building model for the immigrant education work.* DBAF has requested guidance in regard to building the capacity of its grantees and setting future directions for its immigrant education work. Options are presented for DBAF's consideration in terms of how the organization can build the capacity of its grantees. These options include strategies for using time during grantee meetings to foster collaboration, developing stronger relationships with NYC policy makers and DOE, developing and communicating clear expectations for what it means to be a DBAF grantee, leveraging the immigrant education work by forging partnerships with other foundations and networks, and developing systems of communication among grantees.
- *Conduct ongoing evaluation to assess progress toward achieving DBAF's goals.* Ongoing evaluation needs to be integrated into the network's comprehensive plan. To support this process, DBAF could provide individualized evaluation capacity-building and coaching for grantees, with a focus on learning to build their own logic models in alignment with the logic model. DBAF could also consider refining its grantee reporting requirements to align with targeted medium-term outcomes identified on the logic model and to show evidence of these outcomes over the grant period. Once a more consistent reporting system is in place, it may be possible for DBAF to assess its overall impact on its goals for immigrant education.